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Mapping Baptistic Identity

The extended academic team of the International Baptist Theological Seminary and contributing colleagues are taking on a complex research task of ***Mapping Baptistic Identity*** in times of cultural transition in Europe. The goal of the project is the publication of an academic Research Series of monographs, collections of scholarly essays and conference proceedings systematically exploring the central descriptive marks of baptistic identity from a multi-disciplinary perspective. 'Baptistic' in terms of this project designates congregational, 'free' or 'believer's' ecclesial formations that might include Baptists but also Pentecostals, the Brethren, Mennonites, and so forth. These are communities forming a robust sub-Christian tradition with distinct and discernable ways of theologising contextually. Keeping in mind the coherent network of interrelated baptistic communities in the wider European context, research aims of this series are focused primarily on those at Europe's eastward ends: Post-Communist Eastern and Central European, Middle Eastern and Central Asian contexts. The identity of the ecclesial groupings in this part of Europe and Asia is largely under-researched and publicly under-represented (or quite often misrepresented).

The project envisions, but is not limited to, publications on such issues as historical identity; contemporary convictional theological – particularly narrative and artistic – expressions of communal identity; moral, ecclesial, leadership, educational and missional challenges facing baptistic communities; interaction with dominant traditional religious bodies and the secular social context; and tension and partnership with foreign missionary outreach in the community's local context.

Considering the communal nature of customary baptistic living, specific emphasis is on inquiring into identity formation at a personal and corporate level as well as the communal practices of presence, faith witness and involvement with the surrounding culture. The hope of the project is that it will give 'voice to the voiceless' by attending to the primary modes of expressing communal religious convictions. It aims also to provide for the emergence of a holistic interdisciplinary space for theological discourse, bringing about a deeper understanding of the distinctive indigenous doctrinal practices of diverse and yet family-bound baptistic communities spread around more than fifty ecclesial contexts in Europe, Central Asia, the Middle East and beyond. While the purpose of the series is primarily academic, it is also directed at the enrichment of the educational curriculum and the stimulation of academic research interests of young master's and doctoral students.

*See pp.50-51 for a review of the first Research Publication
by Dr Rollin G Grams*

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Editorial

This issue of the *Journal of European Baptist Studies* takes us firmly into volume six. I believe this gives the Journal a sense of permanence in the field of reflection in theology and related disciplines. It is our conviction that we are continuing to deliver on our founding aim – giving believers in Europe the opportunity to explore issues of theology and practice.

In this issue we give proper recognition to senior members of our IBTS research community. Many say that Baptist identity begins with a deep love and immersion in the Scriptures. Unfortunately, this is not always evidenced in Baptist worship today in certain parts of the world where scant attention is paid to the reading of Scripture. At IBTS we have an excellent team of biblical scholars and the doyen of that team, Professor Dr Wiard Popkes, demonstrates this in his study on ‘Rebirth in the New Testament’. Wiard is a graduate of Rüslikon, a former chair of our Board of Trustees and now a distinguished Research Professor with us. We are delighted to give prominence to his scholarship at the beginning of Volume six.

No less eminent is our Research Professor in Church History, Dr John H Y Briggs, one of the authors of the new *Baptists Together in Christ 1905-2005* (of the eleven authors no less than seven are intimately connected with IBTS either as lecturers or alumni). However, in this issue of our *Journal*, Professor Briggs offers an interesting insight into European Baptist involvement in the ecumenical movement over the past sixty years.

Another of our lecturers, Dr Jim Purves, who pastors in the Scottish capital, Edinburgh, helps us reflect on the ethical significance of Jesus’ resurrection. Meanwhile, Dr Anthony Thacker, who spent sabbatical time with us a few years ago, reflects on the continuing debate between paedobaptists and believer baptists in connection with infant and believer baptism, grace and circumcision.

Finally, we print, for your consideration, the BWA ‘Centenary Message’ delivered to 13,000 Baptists in Birmingham, England, this past summer. Does it describe your identity? What issues are raised for you about our gathering, intentional, baptistic communities as you reflect on this message?

The Revd Keith G Jones
Rector, IBTS.

Rebirth in the New Testament

1. Terminology

Rebirth is a metaphor (Nicodemus in John 3 did not catch that and got it all wrong). In the New Testament and its world, it has a wide-ranging word-field. There is a wider and a more narrow terminology. In a wider sense, rebirth/renewal encompasses newness, new creation, restitution, children of God, etc. Almost a hundred years ago, Adolf von Harnack made a list of fifty terms in this connection. What we find in the New Testament is by no means uniform, either in terms of semantics, tradition or fixed terminology. Rather, we observe a wide variety of different terms and concepts.

In a narrow or strict sense, the term ‘rebirth’ is found only in the latter parts of the New Testament. Nowhere is the aspect of birth of any importance. The metaphor implies renewal, new conditions, and new possibilities of life. The Greek terms for rebirth in a more narrow sense are: *παλιγγενεσία*, *πάλιν γίνεσθαι*, and *γεννάω*. The noun *παλιγγενεσία* occurs only twice (Mt. 19:28 and Tit. 3:5). It denotes ‘getting into existence again’, but has no connotations to giving birth. *Γεννάω* is a term of biology, just as *ἀποκύειν* is (James 1:15,18). It can be used for both the male and the female, i.e. to beget and to give birth. Since it is God in all New Testament instances who is the subject of *γεννάω*, the metaphorical use is beyond doubt. The Old Testament does not use this metaphor at all, as it describes God as being beyond sexuality. The New Testament knows of no female mediating figure. Only much later in Church history does the metaphor ‘Mother Church’ appear.

The New Testament applies several adverbs and prepositions such as *ἀνά-*, *καίν-*, *πάλιν-*, and *νέο-*. They are a bit ambiguous insofar as they can denote both the replacement of something old by something of better quality; they can denote, too, simply the repair or restitution of something. There is no instance in the New Testament that would indicate anything like re-incarnation of the soul (or the like).

Let us take a quick look at contemporary usage. Plato (Tim 23b) formulates: From time to time the Athenians return from their beginnings to their youth, as it were: *Πάλιν ἐχ' ἀρχῇ οἶον γίνεσθε*. The metaphor describes a renewal, no new being. Philo (VitMos 2:65) calls Noah and his sons the inaugurators of a new period of the world: *παλιγγενεσίας ἐγέντο ἡγέμενος καὶ δευτέρας ἀρχηγέται περι ὁδου*. Cicero (Att 6:6) uses *παλιγγενεσία* for ‘political return’, Josephus (Ant 11:66) for the return

from evil. In medicine, it can mean both the healing and the resurgence of disease. Re-incarnation of the soul can also be described as *παλιγγενεσία* and *μετεμψύσωσις* (not found in the New Testament).

2. 1 Peter and John's Writings

The metaphor 'rebirth' in a narrow, specific sense is in the New Testament represented by 1 Peter and the Gospel of John. 1 Pet. 1:3,23 uses the verb *ἀναγεννάω* (only here in the New Testament, not in the LXX).

God has reborn us into a living hope through Christ's resurrection from the dead, reborn not from perishable but from imperishable seed, through the living and lasting word of God.

The metaphor points to new life as we also find it in 2:2: "Like newborn babies, drinking milk." The emphasis lies on the new and lasting quality of such life, as the words "living, lasting, and imperishable" indicate. Hence, the orientation is towards the future. 'Hope' is quite significant in 1 Pet. (cf. 3:15: "give account of the hope within you"), similarly 'inheritance' (1:4). It is only logical that practical consequences be drawn, as we observe in 1:13ff, 22ff, and 2:1ff. James 1:18 apparently follows the same pattern. As 1 Pet. contains references to baptism (cf. 2:1ff, 3:21), there seems to be a close connection between rebirth and baptism. In the second and third centuries, various Christian writers picked up this terminology of *ἀναγεννάω*, but *ἀναγέννησις* never became a technical term for baptism.

John uses the simplex *γεννάω* in the passive form, mostly connected with *ἐκ θεοῦ*, also *ἄνωθεν ἐκ πνεύματος* and "out of water and spirit" (Jn. 1:13; 3:3.5.6.8; 1 Jn. 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1). The emphasis falls on 'new life'. In John's writings, *ζωή αἰώνιος* is the central term for salvation, after all. The role of the Spirit is important (parallel to the "word of God" in 1 Pt. and James). Such new life is a gift from God, unavailable to human beings as the contrast between flesh and spirit underlines (Jn. 3:6f). Rebirth is identical with "becoming children of God" (Jn. 1:12; 1 Jn. 3:2) and with "entering God's Kingdom" (Jn. 3:3.5). Just as in 1 Pet., there is a connection with baptism (3:5), and with a commitment to an appropriate conduct (1 Jn.).

As far as we know, the metaphor 'rebirth' (as a narrow term) in a religious sense does not occur before the first Christian century. Its direct roots are not found in biblical tradition. The idea as such is of a general

Hellenistic background. Although it is linked with baptism in the New Testament, it is an independent concept, not directly derived from ‘new creation’ (cf. below). It seems that towards the end of the first century, the concept becomes of general interest, not limited to Christianity. Apparently this shift is imbedded in a changed understanding of salvation. Salvation is now more transcendent, beyond the perishable world; it is of a new quality. Hence ‘hope’ receives increasing importance. Rebirth in the New Testament thus indicates some kind of replacement, conducted by God, from the realm of the perishable to what will last for eternity. Both 1 Pet. and Jn. attest this emphasis.

3. Παλιγγενεσία

As we said before, there are only two instances in the New Testament with this term.

Tit. 3:4-7: “God saved us through the bath of *παλιγγενεσία* and *ἀνακαίνωσις* of the Holy Spirit, which he poured richly upon us.” Like in Jn. 3, the Spirit is the power by which renewal is achieved. As in 1 Pet., Tit. 3 uses the terms ‘hope’ and ‘to inherit’, pointing to the future. The syntax of v.5 is not exactly clear. It can be read as both terms meaning the same, i.e. ‘new beginning, renewal’, or the *καί* is interpreted as ‘that is’, meaning bath of rebirth, the renewal by the Spirit. The result is about the same. The quality of the bath is that of renewal. The metaphor is that of cleansing, washing away dirt (cf. 1 Pet. 3:21; Col. 3:5ff.). As in Jn. 3 and 1 Pet., there is a connection between rebirth and baptism.

The picture in Mt. 19:28 is quite different:

In the *παλιγγενεσία*, when the Son of Man sits upon his throne of glory, also you will sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Lk. 22:29ff speaks about the Kingdom of God instead. The scope in Mt. 19 is the general renewal of the world, the shift from the present to the coming *aion*, which sets the world straight again. Cf. the related term “end/conclusion of the world” *συντέλεια τοῦ αἰῶνος* in Mt. (13:39f; 24:3; 28:20).

Such concepts as in Mt.19:28 were not unknown at that time. Jewish apocalypticism speaks about the time “when God will renew his creation” (syrBar 32:6, et al.). Even the Roman poet Virgil (4 Ekloge 4f.) speaks of the coming of the new age which will inaugurate a new order of the centuries. The Stoic variant has a notable difference from the apocalyptic

notion. They favour a periodic return of the cosmos into its original former state. This concept is cyclic, not linear-eschatological.

Mt. 19:28 thus adds a different aspect to what rebirth could stand for in the first century. What we found in 1 Pet. etc. implies a new chance for humanity to enter a life of superior quality. Statements like Mt. 19 transpose the quality shift to the cosmic dimension. Both concepts envisage a fundamental change of existence.

4. Paul

The apostle applies rebirth terminology on a variety of occasions including reference to his own mission work in which he becomes a spiritual father (1 Thes. 2:11). The Christians receive *υιοθεσία*; they become adopted children of God. The Spirit is at work in this process (Gal 4:5ff.; Rom 8:14ff.23ff.). The present as well as the future dimensions are important (cf. 'inheritance', 'hope'). What Christians experience is an *ἀνακαίνωσις* (2 Cor. 4:16; Rom. 12:2), also called a metamorphosis (2 Cor. 3:18; Rom 12:2). The believer is renewed within. He/she receives a new self (Gal. 2:20; Rom. 8:9ff.), i.e. Christ, or the Spirit. Baptism-into-death brings about the *καυνότης τη ζωῇ* (Rom. 6:3ff.).

Paul's metaphors are directly related to physical life, biology, anthropology and psychology. Metamorphosis means reshaping, the renewal *ἀνακαίνωσις* means a new orientation in human beings. Baptism indicates even the transition through death into a new existence. One of the key phrases is 2 Cor. 5:17: "If anyone is in Christ, he/she is a *καυνὴ κτίσις*. The old has gone, new has come." The concept of a new creation is Jewish. Its background is found in Isaiah 43:16-21; 65:16-23. God will renew his creation. Christ is the new Adam, a corporate personality, the eschatological *Urmensch*. It is *in Christ* that we partake in this divine renewal of creation, not separate from him; the emphasis falls on the first words. The old creation had become condemned to death. Christ's victory on the cross has overcome death. The scope is (according to 1 Cor. 15) that even the 'last enemy' (death) will be defeated. For the time being, we receive the spirit as a pledge *ᾠραβών* of eternal life (2 Cor. 4-6; Rom. 6, 8:17ff.; Phil. 3:9ff.).

The term 'new creation' is first attested in Jubilees 4:26. In Jewish apocalypticism it denotes the future final salvation. In JosAs the Egyptian bride of Joseph is renewed in the sense of receiving the status of a Jewish person; having been a Gentile, she has now become a person on the same

footing as a Jew, and hence Joseph may marry her. Later on rabbis compare a proselyte with a newborn child. This comparison, however, is confined to his/her new status in terms of religion and law, being in this limited sense a new person.

What is clear then is that Paul's concept of renewal, transformation and new creation is of biblical origin, concentrating on God's eschatological act of renewing his creation. Access to that all-encompassing renewal is granted by Christ, the new Adam. Where Paul relates renewal with baptism (cf. Rom. 6), it is done by way of the metaphor of dying with Christ (not that of cleansing as in 1 Pet.).

5. Colossians and Ephesians

Both letters take up the concept of renewal within the Pauline tradition, emphasising the eschatological relocation effected by Christ's resurrection (Col. 1:13; Eph. 2:6). Both epistles underline the consequences of this change in life. It is necessary to 'change dresses', viz., to put off the 'old man' and put on the new (Col. 3:9ff; Eph. 4:22ff). This act is important for ecclesiology, there are no differences, we all look alike. The universal unity of the body of Christ receives emphasis (Col. 3:11; Eph. 2:15). Col. 2:12 makes a direct reference to baptism. The metaphor of clothing is probably related to baptismal habits as well. On the whole, both epistles put more emphasis on the individual new *ἄνθρωπος*.

6. 'Sitz im Leben'

At several places we noted the propinquity between renewal/rebirth and baptism. Their backgrounds should not be blurred. Baptism is not the origin of the metaphor. There is no uniform origin at all. We observed several major concepts and emphases: renewal of the creation by God, transformation of the entire cosmos, a shift from a perishable existence into a transcendent world of higher quality.

These concepts became related to the core of the Christian message, viz., new life in Christ. Rebirth/renewal is closely associated with conversion. Aspects like 'children of God' and 'endowed with the Spirit' enhanced the concept of a thorough change in a person's life. Since Christian baptism became the very rite of initiation, i.e. of renewal into new existence, it is no wonder that the 'Sitz im Leben' of rebirth shifted towards baptism, as several texts attest.

There has been much debate among scholars as to where this relation had its origin. We can exclude today: first, the analogy of pagan mystery cults; second, a word of Jesus (as Mt. 18:3 – certainly not for infant baptism). Probably the connection was drawn by early Christians simply because the affinity was so close.

7. Theological aspects

By way of theological summary, let us collect the salient aspects.

1. God is the creator. Rebirth is caused by God. The individual person participates in God's renewal of his creation through God's initiative and activity.
2. Eschatology: Rebirth is a part of what God does eschatologically, initiated by the so-called Christ-event, in particular Christ's resurrection. In this set-up, rebirth is placed in the tension between the present 'newness of life' and the final overcoming of death.
3. The Spirit is effective in the act of renewal; he conveys the certainty of salvation and governs the self of the believer.
4. The human being as a whole is renewed, not just the soul. Ecstatic experiences are not constitutive.
5. Renewal is a part of God's saving activity, but it is not delineated within the context of an *ordo salutis*. The human person is aware of being a child of God. Faith and ethical consequences are parts of the entire process.
6. Life is the essential element, i.e. the participation in what God provides by his new creation.

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Baptists and the Ecumenical Movement

Introduction

The Baptist World Alliance is generally regarded as one of the major Christian world communions. The European Baptist Federation is an associate member of the Conference of European Churches. Several Baptist Unions in Europe are members of the World Council of Churches, the Conference of European Churches or both. However, in the Baptist tradition, amongst many, there is a wariness of speaking or writing about the ecumenical movement. Though the Baptist World Alliance has had dialogues with several Christian World Communions, the language of the BWA always talks about co-operative Christianity rather than ecumenism.

In these notes, John Briggs sets out a helpful summary of the way some European Baptists, principally, have engaged with the ecumenical movement.

History

1. Given that the origins of the Baptist movement are to be found in the history of the Radical Reformation and within the logic of English Separatism, it is difficult not to see Baptists as naturally schismatic – often seen by others as the awkward squad. I think I am right in saying that of all the united churches that have come into being, only that in North India has any Baptist involvement.

2. But Baptist ecumenical involvement cannot be too easily dismissed, for early Baptists, though separating from State Churches, were well aware of the dangers of becoming isolated and sectarian. The Particular Baptist Confession of 1677 speaks of each church being “bound to pray continually for the good and prosperity of all the churches of Christ in all places”. The General Baptist Orthodox Creed of 1679 makes a similar affirmation with regard to both the one invisible Catholic Church and the visible universal church here on earth in which it claimed membership for the churches it represented.

3. Moreover, early Baptists, according to E. A. Payne, were influenced in their ecclesiology by John Owen’s *True Nature of a Gospel Church*, 1689. Here Owen emphatically asserted that “the Church that confines its Duty unto the Acts of its own Assemblies, cuts itself off from the Church

Catholick; nor will it be safe for any man to commit the Conduct of his Soul unto such a Church”.

4. All this confirms my contention that the tradition is one which, driven to separation from a corrupt state church that was seen as only partially reformed, was nevertheless anxious to avoid lapsing into sectarianism.

5. Other seventeenth-century voices in favour of wider patterns of interrelationship:

[i] John Bunyan: *Water Baptism no bar to communion*, leading on to the existence of what are called Union Churches and in the wake of the Evangelical Revival came the Bedfordshire Union of Christians, all of which tried to hold the two branches of the Congregational family together in common witness.

[ii] The influential seventeenth-century General Baptist messenger, Thomas Grantham, is on record as making two significant comments, each interesting in themselves but doubly interesting when set side by side. As early as 1678 he wrote, “When it shall please God to put into the Hearts of the Rulers of the Nations, to permit a Free and General Assembly, of the differing Professors of Christianity, for the finding out of Truth, we trust that some of the Baptized Churches will (if permitted) readily make their appearance with others to help on that needful work”. But in the same work he also wrote, “I could wish that all congregations of Christians of the world that are baptized according to the appointment of Christ would make one consistory at least sometimes to consider matters of difference among them”. In this way he identifies the two issues of ecumenical and international Baptist relationships. Crudely put he is arguing both for a World Council of Churches (WCC) and a Baptist World Alliance (BWA).

6. Two dimensions of ecumenism – international and inter-confessional. The adjective ecumenical was used for both, so when, prior to the founding of the BWA in 1905, the Baptist Union Council in the UK decided to have an ecumenical session, what that meant was a session in which Baptists from other parts of the world gave their testimony. Initially only English speaking representatives from North America and the dominions were invited but, in the event, a number of European Baptists got in on the act so it became larger in scope than originally intended.

7. It is therefore an ecumenical question today, when one Baptist body withdraws from fellowship from other Baptist bodies. This is a grave

matter because it necessarily means ‘unchurching’ those from whom they withdraw, and that is why it should not be returned with like for like. Such actions involve asking the crucial ecumenical question – ‘Who or where is church?’ If you perceive anything of the Spirit of Christ in other Christian bodies you are bound to relate to them.

8. The ecumenical question is about relating to other people ‘just like me’, but also relating to other people/groups ‘who are nothing like me/us’. Arguably then there can, and should, be different levels of relating – with fellow free church groups in some kind of free church council, or with other evangelicals in an evangelical alliance, though initially people did this as individuals rather than as church representatives. But the early leadership was greatly indebted to Baptists and those in the leadership of the British Baptist Union in particular. However, even such a close knit group was not without its practical and theological problems – slave holding, everlasting punishment, and Spurgeon’s challenge to evangelical clergy in the Church of England to reject the lie of pronouncing children brought for baptism ‘regenerate’ – a comment which provoked Lord Shaftesbury to call him “a very saucy fellow”. There are still problems today as one well known British Baptist, Steve Chalke, has discovered.

9. It is appropriate to pick up the theme of developments in history that called for schemes of wider co-operation:

[i] Persecution and lack of full civic rights; therefore Dissenting Deputies [1732ff] Committee of the Three Denominations, and other organisations campaigning for religious liberty, sometimes rather stridently. The more positive side of that tradition is to be found in the Free Church movement which remains important, for whereas the free churches readily accept one another’s ordained ministry, the Anglicans, for all their ecumenical talk, do not. I think in similar fashion persecution in Eastern Europe has drawn Christians closer together and when the pressure has been removed old tyrannies have reasserted themselves.

[ii] Experience and outworking of the Evangelical Revival:

- Itinerancy and Village Preaching
- Overseas Missionary Endeavour
- Bible Society [1804] Religious Tract Society [1799] – but even here problems, especially for Baptists over whether or not to translate the Greek baptizo – or as others claimed simply transcribe the Greek.

Because of this Baptists had to develop separate agencies for Bible translation – in the UK the Bible Translation Society, associated with the Baptist Missionary Society, even though one of the Secretaries of the Bible Society [Joseph Hughes] was a Baptist

- Sunday Schools/youth work: here difficulties over catechisms
- Combined Philanthropy
- YMCA and SCM.

10. But the Evangelical Revival also presented problems for Baptists. The question was whether, by holding to a closed table, Baptist unchurched the rest of Christendom. Robert Hall thought they did – how dare they, when the Spirit had united the churches in mission, insist on rules, pace his opponent, Joseph Kinghorn of Norwich, which divided them at the table? The Evangelical Revival re-emphasised the case for open communion.

11. So let me make the point that evangelicalism and ecumenism are far from being opposed: rather the one is the child of the other.

12. If we move forward in time we come to what is widely regarded as a watershed date, 1910, and the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, to which so many ecumenical agencies look for their origins or at least a significant catalyst. Baptist historian, Brian Stanley, has challenged this, reminding us that two earlier conferences in London and New York in 1888 had larger attendances, that the delegates to Edinburgh were very largely confined to North America and the UK – 1,000 out of 1216 – that there were only seventeen who came from the non-western world, of whom no fewer than five were Baptists. All were Asians, though one was working as a missionary amongst the Indian sugar-cane workers in Natal, all funded by the American Baptist Foreign Missionary Society. Other compromises involved the placation of the high Anglican missionary societies and their supporting bishops by excluding from the agenda any area where there was an established Roman Catholic Church, thus excluding all discussion of work in Latin America and indeed Latin Europe. There was only one session devoted to Africa so this much-heralded Conference was in fact a talking shop for Anglo Saxon mission executives to discuss their strategies for Asia.

13. Nevertheless three of the four strands that came together in the founding of the WCC came out of Edinburgh, and these four movements sometimes shine through later attempts to integrate the work. They are the Life and Work Movement, Faith and Order, and the International

Missionary Council (IMC), together with the older World Council of Christian Education (WCCE) born out of the International Sunday School Lessons Council.

14. Life and Work and Faith and Order came together in 1938 in Utrecht to form the WCC in process of formation, delayed for another ten years by World War II and its aftermath. The IMC came in at New Delhi in 1961 and the WCCE at Nairobi in 1965.

15. Briefly let me say the WCC is a Council of Churches – its member bodies are national churches, and it is a Council which can only offer advice, it cannot mandate or compel. Baptists number 6% of the member churches but when you add up their membership they still number 5% of the whole or just 1% behind the Reformed and the Methodist, which is significant because 11% of the member churches are Methodist and 30% are Reformed, which must mean that the Baptist churches, though fewer, are larger in membership. The whole shape is distorted by the fact that the two orthodox families number 6% of member churches but 47% of the membership. Baptist Churches in Europe who are members include the Danes, the Hungarians, the Italians and the British. In the past Scottish, Dutch and Russian Baptists have been members.

16. Current concerns of the Council concern developing relationships with the member churches, especially the orthodox, in which I was rather heavily involved; working for peace and reconciliation in a world torn apart by violence; building up the unity of the church; saying a prophetic word to the power-mongers of the world so much dominated by the forces of globalization; working for justice, peace and a proper respect for creation; entering into critical dialogue with the leaders of other faith communities; promoting mission and evangelism. The Council engages in an extensive diaconal ministry seeking to meet a wide range of human need, an educational programme for young scholars from the younger churches, and a special initiative to engage with the HIV/AIDS pandemic especially in Africa.

17. In all this, Baptists have played a significant part as members of staff, as members of vital committees and commissions, and as office holders. I think we punch well above our weight in these respects. Some twenty British Baptists (including two principals of Spurgeon's College) were there in the shaping of the Faith and Order Movement, together with distinguished leadership from Dr Glenn Hinson of the Southern Baptists, Horace Russell and Neville Callum from Jamaica, and Paul Fiddes of

Oxford in recent study work on the nature of baptism. Perhaps the most distinguished contribution from Great Britain came from Ernest Payne who served both as a Vice Moderator of the Central Committee and a President of the Council. Payne's predecessor, Dr Aubrey, was involved in drafting the constitution of the Council. Not surprisingly Baptists have given distinguished service in the area of Mission and Evangelism with Gwynneth Hubble and Victor Hayward from the UK both serving on the staff. This commission also benefited from the staff input of Raymund Fung, a Baptist missiologist from Hong Kong, with considerable insight. Leading the planning team for the recent World Conference on Mission and Evangelism in Athens was my successor on the Central Committee, the Revd Ruth Bottoms, the current moderator of the Baptist Union Council. One of the most distinguished scholars employed by the WCC was the American Baptist, Dr Paul Abrecht who made an enduring contribution to Church and Society. Distinguished service in church aid has been given by the Revd Myra Blyth who served for eleven years on the staff of the Council, reshaping its diakonia work before serving as Director for relationships. Currently serving on the staff is Simon Oxley who recently brought an Education conference to IBTS, a branch of the work that was once served by Dr Imosogie of Nigeria as Vice Moderator.

18. Of course there are many other levels of ecumenical engagement – regional, national, and the leadership of Christian aid organisations. We should be proud that in this State-Church dominated continent, two of the three general secretaries of the Conference of European Churches have been Baptists, the first General Secretary Dr Glen Garfield Williams [1961-86] and the current post holder Dr Keith Clements [1997- 2005]. In the UK Gethin Abraham Williams is the Secretary of Churches Together in Wales [CYTUN] and Dr David Goodbourn, a Baptist layman is the current General Secretary of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. The list gets too long, but Michael Taylor's [IBTS Nordenhaug lecturer 2005] service as Director of Christian Aid also enables me to mention Keith Jones' service on the Board of Christian Aid amongst his other ecumenical commitments. Similar stories could be told for other nations and regions: the Ecumenical Councils in Denmark and Finland both have Baptist Secretaries, Holger Lam and Jan Edstrom, whilst Per Midteide served as secretary of Norwegian Church Aid.

19. Lists are boring and I know mine is incomplete but I hope I have filed enough detail to show that the Baptist contribution in this area has been sacrificial and substantial, but often unrecognised.

20. Let me conclude by refocusing on the issues here involved. It sometimes seems as if the claims of unity and fellowship are set over against faithfulness to the truth as we see it. There are compelling arguments on both sides because the differences separating churches can be very great. How far do we go and when does it become a compromise too far? On the other hand do we not find ourselves in situations where, although the formulas seem all wrong, there is a perception deep down inside us of the spirituality of another tradition which witnesses something of Christ to us?

21. So often the goal of unity seems so far off that we need to remind ourselves that this unity is both gift and goal and we need to enjoy the gift of the unity we already possess whilst ever striving for richer and deeper relationships. But there can be no escape into a spiritual unity that does not drive us to seek better relationships. And there remains the missionary imperative to all this that Timothy Richard of China made so clear at the first BWA Congress a hundred years ago, namely, how can we expect an unbelieving world to take us seriously in our talk about a gospel of reconciliation when we remain so obviously un-reconciled one to another?

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The ethical significance of Jesus Christ's Resurrection

1. Introduction

The appeal of James William McClendon's ethical methodology lies in its essential simplicity and ready adaptation for pastoral situations. The notion of there being three, integrated components within the Christian, decision-making process is not beyond the grasp of most people. As a pastor, when I discuss problems with people and hold McClendon's methodological model in my mind, I find that the three complementary strands that he weaves together work well in describing and developing how Christian people make decisions. The three strands are distinctive enough to be grasped as separate components, but it is also easily understood that they are, in practice, inevitably intertwined.

With regard to the first strand, people are generally happy to find that their natural, physical needs can be legitimately affirmed. God is our creator and sustainer. He gave us our bodies; he designed their normal function. We are more than simply physical entities; but the physical is still part of the picture. Our needs for shelter, clothing, food, companionship and intimacy, for self-realisation and propagation of the species: all of these are legitimately felt parts of our humanity, which God wants to bring to expression within his Cosmos. To be told this can be quite liberating for Christian people. It is good to be told that your instinct for survival is not wrong.

The second strand is the social. It is the affirmation that we are not formed as persons in separation from others. God's creation of mankind is as a social creature: he made us both male and female. Furthermore, God develops and affirms our personalities in the context of our social plurality, as people. The individual is affirmed as a true person through social engagement. Here the needs, expectations and desires of others are recognised as legitimate both in motivating and constraining us. This too can be liberating for the serious Christian, when they find that social responsibilities are influencing their individual goals. Especially in the setting of a western, first world culture, where the twin pursuits of self-discovery and self-fulfilment can be paramount, this second strand's affirmation that we must seek to function in a social context is a welcome antidote to narcissism and self-centred spirituality.

The third strand is the resurrection strand. More specifically, it is the working through of the implications for us of the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is this strand that affirms the central significance of Jesus Christ, above all other factors, for the formation of the Christian. The way it works in building our understanding of the Christian life is twofold. First, we have to look to the life of Jesus, acknowledging the environment and context of both Old and New Testaments. This is to grasp the Gospel narratives, as they have been preserved in the church's canon of Scripture, allowing those narratives to shape our understanding of Jesus and the life we have been called into by God. We are to see that the historical Jesus and his community of disciples is formative for us as Christians, as church together now. More than formative, it is paradigmatic. We are to read the text in a way that allows us to be directly affected by the humanity of Jesus Christ. As he dealt with people then, so he deals with people now. We are called to perceive how his impact on our present situation is directly affected by his impact on the situation we read of. We are to read the text and to say, *this is that*. What we seek to do in *this* situation is how Jesus calls his disciples to believe and behave in *that* situation.

But we are not to stop there. We have also to see that the Christ who affects us now is the historic Jesus Christ of the Gospels, who has been raised to newness of life in resurrection power. He is the one who, fully like us in his humanity, has ascended into the heavens, from where he will return one day. Meanwhile, it is this Christ and Lord who now pours out his Holy Spirit upon us, to enable us to walk in his way. The Holy Spirit comes to us, giving us a foretaste of the transformative fullness that will be ours on his return, strengthening us to live for Jesus Christ now. This resurrection strand causes us to speak, in addition to *this is that*, of a future Kingdom of God that is breaking into our present: to affirm that *then is now*. What will happen, *then* in the future, is happening already *now* in the present, through our prayer, perseverance and the presence of the Holy Spirit in our midst.

Having gathered these strands of the natural, social and resurrection together, the three can then be woven together in a manner that affirms and challenges the practices of both the individual and the Christian community. The question I invite you to explore with me in this paper derives from what I would suggest is a potential weakness arising from the application of McClendon's methodology in some contexts, and a consequent need to further develop our appreciation of the third, resurrection strand. For McClendon's approach depends upon our having a sufficiently developed appreciation of Christ's resurrection and its effect

upon us. If our understanding is weak, then we will find that this resurrection thread insufficiently informs and affects the other two strands, the natural and the social.

Why is this a potential weakness in McClendon? The problem lies not in the methodology of McClendon, but with the contexts in which McClendon might be applied. Especially in the west, popular, evangelical belief can spiritualise an understanding of Christ's resurrection along the lines of, "Jesus died to forgive us of our sins and went to heaven. And if we believe in him, we too will go to heaven. Did Jesus rise from the dead? Of course he did! God took him up to heaven as a reward for giving his life for us." Close to the heart of truth there can come a whispering challenge: "did Jesus *really*, bodily, rise from the dead?" Where the bodily resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ are reduced to romanticised accoutrements to the central core of our confession, there is no real need to develop our understanding of them. At best, they remain a dream we long for. At worst, they are mutated in our thinking into becoming a projection of our personal fantasies regarding heaven and the hereafter. This is the context in which McClendon's methodology, if brought to bear, can fail. For this reason, we need to identify certain central, core beliefs which Christian communities need to grapple with when looking to the significance of Christ's resurrection.

In terms of working out what is to come when Jesus returns, in a way that really does shape and affect our attitudes and behaviour now, what are we to believe regarding resurrection? The reader will understand, I trust, that this question in no sense relates to debates over millennialism, whether pre-, post- or a-millennial. What here arrests our attention is this: what difference does the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ make to our behaviour now? Yes, it affects our hope; but is that all? Is it about an ideal and a fulfilment that we long for? Or is there another aspect to the physical resurrection of our Lord that is to shape and affect us right now? This is the question that we are seeking to engage with here. In doing so, we will develop experimental themes and dialogue briefly, through the footnotes, with some issues raised by the Romanian evangelical scholar, Emil Bartos, in *Deification in Eastern Orthodox Theology*.¹ This will hopefully allow both the general reader to engage with my argument and also give the applied theologian something more to chew on. I will also allude through the footnotes to key scriptural passages that, for all Christian disciples, are integral to ongoing reflection on these matters.

¹ Emil Bartos' study on the work of the Orthodox Theologian, Dumitru Staniloae, *Deification in Eastern Orthodox Theology* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999).

2. Remember, *bodily* resurrection!

The Scottish theologian, Thomas Torrance, tells² of how he visited his teacher, Karl Barth, shortly before Barth's death. Barth, leaning over, gave these words as a legacy to his pupil: "remember, *bodily* resurrection!" Bodily resurrection: here is the profound shock and affront to all of our self-contained rationality. It is the physical body of Jesus Christ that was raised from the dead by God our Father, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ did not leave his humanity, born of Mary, to return simply as a spiritual being to the state from which he came. The heavenly *Logos* who became flesh lifts that flesh, metamorphosed and transformed yet still human flesh, into a new dimension of human experience that both astounds and fills us with longing. What on earth can it mean for us now? To begin to answer this question, we must first clarify what we mean by speaking of the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The Christian understanding of all that is to come in the future is vitally rooted in the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. An understanding of what is to come for us must be grounded in Jesus Christ. Centrally, this lies in the relation of the heavenly to the earthly in the constitution of Jesus Christ himself. The relationship of the eternal *Logos* to the temporal flesh is described in patristic theology as the hypostatic union, expressed in Latin as the *communicatio idiomatum*, or the communion of the human and heavenly identities within Christ.

We will not rehearse the complex debate of the early centuries here, but will instead risk representing its general outcome. Mainline Christianity³ has tended to view the nature of Jesus in terms of it being the heavenly *Logos* that gives essential shape to the human aspect of Jesus' nature. The eternal *Logos*, the Son of God, inhabits our human body and nature in a way that does not detract from his substantial, human nature, but is essentially formative in shaping and bending that nature into submission and obedience to our heavenly Father's will, under the enabling power of the Holy Spirit.

At the same time, we have to be cautious. An over emphasis on the divine nature of Jesus Christ can lead to a failure to grasp his full humanity. This is one of the complaints that can arise in dealing with aspects of orthodox thought. If we become preoccupied with emphasising that the divinity of the *Logos* is not compromised through the Incarnation, we can

² T. F. Torrance, *Space, time and Resurrection* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), p. xi.

³ This is my perspective in writing from the context of a western, Reformed, evangelical tradition.

lose sight of the fact that the *Logos* really did *become* flesh.⁴ How we might express this in metaphysical terms is not our concern here. What matters is that we retain an understanding that, in giving shape to the human aspect of Jesus' nature, the inhabitation of humanity by the *Logos* does not in any way compromise that humanity as being constituted, in every way, as personhood that fully embraces and wrestles with the same issues that we meet with in our human condition.⁵

There are two affirmations that we might usefully punctuate. First, the humanity of Jesus is the same as our humanity: nothing more and nothing less. Ironically, this is something that still proves hard for some to grasp,⁶ possibly due to a disinclination to fully assimilate the astounding, outrageous grace of God's condescension and love, that Christ became as we are. The full affront of Paul's declaration, "that God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God",⁷ is still an offence to those who would revere the Saviour as a remote icon, adored yet never to be truly imitated. Secondly, we need to affirm that the divine nature is successfully accommodated within the human nature. There is no question of transplant failure. The two go together, naturally and properly, in Jesus Christ. The divine *Logos*, the incarnate Son of God, can live out in human nature a life filled with the pleasure and purpose of his heavenly Father, fulfilling mankind's calling as the image of God, fully developing and expressing God's likeness in and through human flesh.⁸ More than that, we must not flinch from saying that Christ's personality is developed as a human personality in every way.⁹ The way that Christ grows and matures as a person in developing self-control, social awareness and eschatological expectancy is in the same manner as us, in our maturing as people. The personality of Jesus Christ was developed in the same way as ours, learning to live with legitimate, natural needs within a socially

⁴ This is one of the weaknesses of the eastern position. The immutability of divinity is so stressed, the nature of the Divine incarnation so guarded, that it is hard at times to see how what is described as Incarnation is, in terms accessible to ordinary people, comprehensible. The discussion of Christological *perichoresis* is a case in point (*Deification*, p. 185). This same drift towards qualifying the humanity of Christ can also be detected in western thought (Jim Purves, *The Triune God and the Charismatic Movement* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004), p. 135 ff.).

⁵ Hebrews 5.7-9.

⁶ Larry Hurtado advocates the need to address the relevance of Christ's death for Christian ethical behaviour, in 'Jesus' Death as Paradigmatic in the New Testament', *Scottish Journal of Theology* (57.4), 2004, pp. 413-433.

⁷ 2 Corinthians 5.21 NIV.

⁸ We find no utility in stressing here that the distinction between image and likeness is weaker in western catholic and evangelical thought than in Eastern Orthodox thinking.

⁹ Contrary to Bartos' agreement with Staniloae's apparent rejection of kenoticist thinking. *Deification*, p. 185.

accountable environment, looking for the fullness of the Kingdom of God's coming upon the face of the earth.

Let us now go on to look at two implications arising out of these affirmations. There undoubtedly are others possible, but these two seem foundational in the pursuit of our enquiry. The first is *the anticipatory nature of faith*, as the Holy Spirit moves us forward as people in our development, anticipating the resurrection of our human bodies, as Christ has been raised bodily from the dead. The second is the realisation and fulfilment of *resurrection's eschatological nature* and the effect this has on shaping both our hope and present behaviour. We will deal with these in turn.

3. The anticipatory nature of faith

The days of modernity's reduction of faith to a synonym of existential belief have, hopefully and happily, now passed us by in the western church. The confusion of faith with doctrinal affirmation has proven a crippling malady: intellectual opinion counted as certitude creates an intellectual arrogance and spiritual superficiality in churchmanship. When we look to resurrection in terms of anticipation rather than simply as affirmation, our understanding is brought towards both a more humbling and liberating focus.

Faith as anticipation creates a propensity, within persons and community, to invest in the future; for it is the work of the Spirit of God to bring us more fully into a future that is characterised by resurrection living. We will not remain what we are, simply because Jesus did not remain what he became through the Incarnation. In and through the humanity of Jesus there was a development and maturing that took place through his life, cross and resurrection. So it is for us.

In speaking of faith as anticipation, we are not suggesting any deficiency or insufficiency in Jesus Christ's person or work. Certainly, all the promises and purposes of God, as given to Abraham and his seed, find fulfilment in Christ.¹⁰ Yet our anticipation of fulfilment on earth has to be transformed by anticipation of fulfilment as it finds expression in and through the life of Jesus Christ, where all that he stands for has been both vindicated and fulfilled in the reward¹¹ of his own resurrection and ascension. The promises point the way; but the fulfilment is even better

¹⁰ 2 Corinthians 1.20.

¹¹ Philippians 2.9.

than what was looked for! Through Christ, there is a coming into the fullness of the inheritance of Israel; but at the same time, God gives us more. Our inheritance is now revealed as carrying us beyond the confines of our present earthly existence, just as Christ is transformed in his resurrection beyond the confines of his earthly humanity.

Now a word of caution is due here. A cursory glance at the preceding paragraph might evoke the accusation, 'Platonism!' Is not a dualism between the present material reality and an idealised, spiritual paradigm being introduced here? Certainly not. Platonism knows the vocabulary of God, transcendence and Logos as an intervening principle. But it does not know the affirmation of John 1.14: that *the Logos became flesh*. Platonism has no place within it nor ability to appropriate the notion of material flesh being metamorphosed by the transformational presence of the spiritual, vivifying and enabling change from within.¹² Yet this is the very reality that we are confronted with here. We meet with the noumenal reality of God, not juxtaposed to, but manifest in the flesh of Jesus Christ. In Platonic thinking, there is no way for that which is born of flesh to meet with God. But this is precisely what happens in and through Jesus Christ! His humanity – incarnate, crucified, risen, ascended and glorified – contextualises all knowledge and experience of God, in the present and in the future, within human life. But it is he who gives definition to us, not us to him. It is into the discovery of what his humanity has attained, both in the present and the future, that we are called.

Faith as anticipation calls us into a process of transformation, not simply to a point of decision. It is a process of transformation because of the humanity of Christ and its resurrected nature. It is the resurrected Christ who defines the journey of transformation on which we have embarked, in both the present and the future age. The Spirit of God blows through creation, moving us towards the revelation of Jesus Christ, consecrated, crucified and raised in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God calls and coaxes us along the path that leads us into fresh realisation of the revelation of God's goodness, brought to us in Jesus Christ. The Spirit of God draws us into and through the Saviour towards self-death,¹³ that we might arise to live out intentionally Christian lives. As is true for the personality of Christ, developed through the hypostatic union, we in our humanity must also desire to be conformed, through the leading and working of the Holy Spirit, into a fulfilment that conforms to our heavenly Father's pleasure, developing into the image and progressing into the

¹² 2 Peter 1.4.

¹³ 2 Corinthians 5.14-15.

likeness of Christ. We must want to be as he is, for as Christ in his humanity willingly gave himself to obedience, so too we must willingly desire the deeper workings and ways of the Spirit of God to produce a clearer and profounder likeness to Christ in us.

In all of this, it is vital that our anticipation of faith is focused on the resurrected and ascended nature of Christ's humanity. Why? Because if I simply see the power of resurrection working in me to fulfil desires demarcated by the present shape and context of my humanity, then my focus lies not in the resurrected nature but in the present state of my human nature. As Paul exhorts the dissolute Corinthians, vision and understanding of who we are to be in the present must be shaped by what we are to become, for this flesh and blood of my body in its present state will not inherit the eternal Kingdom.¹⁴ My present body is to be sown into conformity with Christ in his death,¹⁵ that I will also know the continued power of the Spirit of God at work in bringing me to experience the liberating reality of his resurrection.¹⁶

Advocating such a 'death' is not a denial of our natural humanity. Far from it. To embrace Christ in his death is surely to acknowledge that living a life like his, enabled by the Holy Spirit to pursue the Nazareth manifesto of Luke 4.18, is worth giving ourselves to live and to die for. To give ourselves into Christlike conformity is simply to embrace messianic purposefulness. In terms of McClendon's three strands, a Christian ethic requires us to qualify the unfettered imperatives of personal prejudice and preference with constraints formed by both social engagement and resurrection awareness. And it is at this point that the need for an adequate grasp of the nature of the resurrection of Christ is vital. For just as it is by the Holy Spirit that Christ is bodily raised in his humanity from the dead, so it is that our awareness and appreciation of the resurrection strand is engendered by the Holy Spirit, present with and at work within us.

How does the Spirit do this? The Spirit works to help shape our ethical consciousness by embracing us in the resurrection power of Jesus Christ. He energises us as the 'Wind of God', his breath animating and sustaining the creation whilst also working, according to the Father's will, in concert with the Son, to blow and bring us forward into the life of the Son of God made flesh, Jesus Christ.¹⁷ He also teaches us, leading us into a deeper appreciation of the Word, met within the person of Jesus Christ.

¹⁴ 1 Corinthians 15.50.

¹⁵ Romans 6.5.

¹⁶ Philippians 3.10-11.

¹⁷ *Deification*, p. 284.

And so he also draws us into Christlike conformity. The Spirit encounters and embraces us through his ontic actuality¹⁸ in order to give us an experiential foretaste of the power of the age to come.¹⁹

It is so easy to lose sight of this larger, holistic understanding of the Spirit coming to and dealing with us in his ontic actuality. A colleague of mine tells of his upbringing in an area of my country, Scotland. A community, deeply religious, was divided into ‘catholics’ and ‘protestants’. There were problems of alcoholism and violence. How did the church help? Through its teaching on justification, through faith in Christ. The catholics went to ‘confession’ and to ‘Mass’ knowing that, having confessed their sins, they were affirmed in the forgiveness and salvation that comes in and through the death of Christ. The protestants likewise went to church to be told of their terrible, sinful condition; the mercy of God in punishing Jesus rather than them for their sins; and to thank God that, by believing in Jesus, they were forgiven. So the cycle of sin, contrition, justification and then sin again was repeated week by week within the community! Is it not a legitimate complaint of Eastern Orthodoxy, against both Catholic and Protestant expressions of western spirituality, that there is too much emphasis on justification and an insufficient grasp of the foundations, in Christ, for sanctification?

4. Resurrection’s eschatological nature

What is holiness? Asking one mature layperson this question, I was met with the honest reply, “I once thought that I knew what it means, but I don’t anymore”. Holiness, in terms of virtues of purity and integrity, has a short shelf-life in human experience. Can we reduce holiness to the propositional and rational? No. On the other hand, we can neither relegate it to the realms of the noumenal and other-worldly: to be ‘so heavenly minded as to be of no earthly use’. Holiness, if it possesses any meaning, must communicate a communion with God that is a reality experienced upon earth. Holiness cannot be dualistic. It must be holistic.

And the key to holiness, and to transformative power in the Christian life, must be focused and find its pattern and example in the person of Jesus Christ. This is where Eastern Orthodox thinking exposes the deficiency in concentrating on justification and failing to develop sufficiently an understanding of sanctification. Western thought, so often filled with an

¹⁸ We define ‘ontic actuality’ as “the becomingness of God towards us in His own Being”. See *The Triune God*, p.22.

¹⁹ Hebrews 6.5.

Augustinian pessimism regarding the potential of human life, can seem a poor cousin of Orthodoxy's emphasis on transformation,²⁰ emphasising the real potential of the defaced image of God in mankind and the possibility of progressive restoration into a true likeness of God, because of what has been undertaken by Jesus Christ.

In this regard, it is interesting to see how western theology has tended to focus on resurrection as *coming* rather than as present event; while Orthodox thought has focused more on our participation in the *present* reality of resurrection, because of our virtual²¹ participation in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In this sense, the Pauline anticipation of resurrection found in 1 Corinthians 15 is filled with present, ethical significance as well as teleological hope, although there is little evidence of this in popular, western commentaries on that text. The reality of holiness is one that embraces us now and can embrace us more, because of the real potential that is ours to actually participate in and know the power of Christ's resurrection, here and now.²²

Which brings us back to the question. "What is holiness?" And our answer is that it is something rooted in the completeness of God found in Christ, actualised in and for us through our relationship with Christ, by the workings of the Holy Spirit. Holiness is teleological, because it finds its completion in and through Jesus Christ; and it is also presently realisable, through the presence and workings of the Holy Spirit.

4.1 What's coming in the future?

Our object has been to argue for a sufficiently developed understanding of resurrection, in order to develop an ethical synthesis by weaving together the three strands of natural needs, social sense and resurrection reality. Dare we argue that our fulfilment as human beings really involves a transformation, proximating to what orthodoxy understands as a process of *theosis*, bringing us into the image and likeness of God?

In truth, much will depend on how seriously we affirm that Jesus shares our present humanity. If we are to affirm that the personality of Jesus Christ was shaped and formed in and through his humanity's engagement with the cosmos during his life on earth, then the way is

²⁰ *Theosis*.

²¹ The distinction between *virtual* reality, as that which has taken place vicariously for us in and through the experience of Christ in his humanity, and *actual* reality, into which we enter through faith in Christ, is helpfully made by Staniloae, *Deification*, p. 218.

²² Ephesians 1.18-21; 2.4.

opened to see how the ethical mindset of Jesus was itself shaped by natural, social and resurrection strands: the last, in an anticipatory way.²³ On the other hand, if we do not consider Christ's humanity to be the same as ours, or deny that his personality was developed in the same manner as ours, we are in danger of docetism and of projecting a dichotomy and dualism between the heavenly and the earthly.

A failure to recognise the process of human perfection that the Spirit's transformative work brings about is, in itself, a capitulation to dualism. Resurrection is not another process, beyond the present life. Resurrection is the inevitable fulfilment and realisation of our present, human process: because of Jesus Christ.²⁴ Yet the tension between the proleptic, anticipatory effect of the Spirit's presence among us and the present working of the Spirit within us in resurrection power must be maintained, because together they represent the outworking of the Spirit's presence, purpose and power among us. The fullness has touched us, but the complete actualisation of that fullness in us has yet to come. The Holy Spirit calls us on into a process of gradual yet ongoing transformation that continues on throughout our lives.

We need to be renewed in this relationship with God over and over again. The power of the Spirit *actualises* the Kingdom now, in the present. We have to want this and respond to this action of the Spirit, which brings a present manifestation of the future fullness. This present realisation has to be received, appropriated and acted on in faith.

But in acting upon us in resurrection power, the Holy Spirit not only *actualises*, but also heightens our *anticipation*. He brings us to gaze into and focus upon the revelation that is in and through the Word of God made flesh. He enables us to see the Scriptures in a new way, intensifying our longing for what we hope for. We have not yet reached where we are going, in terms of actualising what Christ has achieved for us. We are now children of God but we have not yet entered into the consummate enjoyment of the full inheritance of Sonship. So it is that the Holy Spirit not only *actualises* the presence of the coming Kingdom now, but also allows us to *anticipate* that which is coming in the future.

²³ Hebrews 12.2.

²⁴ "Through the resurrection Christ combines within Himself the condition of the victim and the state of resurrection, the full revelation of the divine life in His humanity. And to those who believe in Him He imparts this same combined nature ... From the risen Christ His Spirit shines forth most powerfully, giving us a foretaste of the likeness of His death and resurrection and leading us at the same time towards perfect likeness to Him." (Demitru Staniloae, *Theology and the Church*, 1980, p. 200), quoted in *Deification*, p. 221.

Our living with the *anticipation* of what is to come is as important for us as the present *actualisation* of it. It is anticipation, as much as the present realisation of Kingdom blessings in our lives, that will critically shape our character and the decisions we make: decisions that affect both ourselves and others. Anticipation provides the context in which the resurrection strand is developed as it affects our daily decisions; but anticipation assigned to the workings of the Spirit without an accompanying actualisation of the Spirit's presence among us is but fantasy. God delights when we seek after both the actualisation of his Spirit's presence and power, here and now; and also when we anticipate the fullness to come. He knows that the fullness is not yet on us. He knows that we experience frustration in wanting to know what he wants, in wanting to do the things that please him. But he delights when we seek to appropriate the nature and character of the ministry of his Son in our lives, making decisions about our lives and their effect on others, in the light of the fullness to come.

4.2 What's coming now?

I would suggest that, at a popular level, there is still insufficient grasp in evangelical thought regarding the transformative process enabled by the Holy Spirit. While Wesleyan influence²⁵ undoubtedly shaped an expectation of transformation into holiness, this was not necessary predicated out of an anthropology linked to a Christology that looked to and embraced all of the life, death, descent into hell, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ²⁶. The preoccupation with phenomena that often characterises charismatic and neopentecostal churchmanship may well arise because of a wider failure in western thought, an insufficient linkage between the teleological future and the eschatologically immanent present. If we have no real grasp that the present work of the Holy Spirit is integrally connected with what we have already, *virtually* become in Christ: that which, by faith, we can *actually* become now; then our present expectation of and desire for the Holy Spirit may not have any meaningful bearing on the transformed reality of our humanity which has virtually taken place, already, in and through the physical resurrection and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ.

²⁵I think especially of 'entire sanctification', with the peremptorial emphasis which marked North American 'baptism of the Holy Spirit' thinking, as well as the emphasis on gradual and incremental sanctification that was stressed in the 'higher life' emphasis of the Keswick Movement.

²⁶*Deification*, p. 222.

We can helpfully grasp a twofold action of the Holy Spirit that the Orthodox identify. On the one hand, there is the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers, constituted together as the body of Christ, the church.²⁷ Here, the work of the Spirit which now occurs in believers is that enabled by the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ into the heavenly places. As Christ's life, death, resurrection and ascension have made new life possible, so it is the Holy Spirit who actualises this in our lives now.²⁸

The strength of the Orthodox approach is that it engages with the transformative action of God in terms of the Spirit's action in the life of the church. Its weakness is that, building on the thought of Gregory of Palamas, this action of the Spirit is not construed of in direct terms, but rather is seen as enabled through the energies of the Triune God, irradiating us in their uncreated power.²⁹ But is it not possible to build on the Orthodox approach? Can we not retrace the development of Orthodox spirituality prior to its Palamite thinking, to a point where we can speak of the ontic actuality of the Holy Spirit directly acting upon the life of the persons and community, in a manner that allows the pattern of ethical life perfected in the ascended Christ to bear on our present attitude and behaviour? Does not the presence of the Spirit with us now, teaching and forming in us the things of Christ, offer substantive content and adjective structure to the development and formation of our ethical strand?

It is not crass to suggest that what we expect of God will affect in some measure the parameters, if not the content, of what we receive from him. Expectation and motivation in looking for the presence, purposefulness and power of the Holy Spirit, in terms of shaping the convictional practices of both the community and the persons within it, is a large part of the process.

Conclusion: Making more sense of the eschatological strand

There are accessible ways forward in seeking to make further sense of the eschatological strand. One, as suggested above, is to review and revise some Orthodox emphases. Another lies in thinking through the implication

²⁷ Here, the Orthodox understanding of the church as organic, ontic reality rather than institutional and structured, is helpful: *Deification*, p. 271.

²⁸ Such logic is fundamental to Orthodox thinking. *Deification*, p. 282.

²⁹ And this, of course, is the difficulty that orthodox theology presents to charismatic and pentecostal theologians: there is a disinclination to speak of direct experience of the Holy Spirit. We see this in Staniloae (*Deification*, p. 283). This deficiency in the development of orthodox thought is explored more fully in *The Triune God*, pp. 73-75.

for us of an Anabaptist spirituality which also sought to preserve some of the tensions discussed above. In the words of Menno Simons, “[The believer] is clothed with the power from above, baptised with the Holy Spirit, and so united and mingled with God that he becomes a partaker of the divine nature and is made conformable to the image of His Son”.³⁰

The present renaissance of Anabaptist studies is helping towards fresh discovery of a spiritual tradition that held a clear expectation of the future age breaking in now, to the present. This, married to an increased interest in the roots and traditions of Orthodox spirituality, is bringing fresh awareness of the transformative work of the Holy Spirit and a rich, fertile resource for constructive, contextual theology. This can only reinforce and help us better appreciate the strength of McClendon’s model and the vital place of the eschatological strand, founded in the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ.

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³⁰ Quoted in Arnold Snyder, *Following in the Footsteps of Christ* (Darton Longman Todd), 2004, p 63.

Baptism, Circumcision and Grace

The debate between paedo-baptists and believer-baptists considered

The classical Baptist argument for believer's baptism – that the New Testament requires such a conclusion – is a Protestant approach, rooted in the Scripture Principle. 'Catholic' arguments – for example, that infant baptism is sustained by virtue of tradition, official church teaching, long-standing historical precedent, and so on – do not undermine this argument for those committed to the Scripture Principle. And it has always been that sense of the natural reading of the New Testament as indicating believer's baptism as the norm in the New Testament church that provides the driving force for the Baptist approach.

However, Protestant arguments for the validity of infant baptism provide more difficulties for Baptists. In this article, we consider two of these – the argument from grace, and the argument from circumcision. The first is traced back to Luther and the second to Calvin by their supporters!

1. Paedo-baptism and Grace

First the argument from grace. Believer's baptism puts the emphasis on the believing faith of the baptismal candidate; since infant baptism cannot, it instead sees the infant's admission to the Church as something given to the child without the child 'deserving' it by conscious faith. Believer's baptism points us to faith; infant baptism points us to an act of grace, and since the child is accepted into the Church of Jesus Christ, it points to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to this infant baptist line, baptism is our mark of belonging to God, and is tied up with God's commitment to us long before our commitment to him, and can therefore be validly administered to an unaware baby long before the infant would be able to make a public declaration of his or her own faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

Consider, for example, this passage from Colin Morris:

Those who charge that infant baptism is meaningless because the child cannot, in any theological sense, have faith, are not only attacking what is not being defended but they are denying the priority of grace over faith. And that is bad theology, at least in the view of those who are heirs of the Reformation. Faith is the gift of God's grace. And there is no prescribed interval between the gift –

grace, and the response – faith. Infant baptism is not rendered invalid if there is no individual faith in the recipient.¹

Michael Green presents a similar case:

Baptism acts as a physical reassurance of our relationship for Christ. And if believer's baptism gives the clearest picture of *our* side of the agreement (publicly acknowledging our allegiance to Jesus and burning our boats behind us) infant baptism gives the clearest picture of *his* side in it all. He accepts us, forgives us, adopts us into his family and offers his Holy Spirit to live in us, not because we have done a thing to deserve it (how can a child a few weeks old possibly earn such wonderful things?) but simply because God is love.²

In his later book, *Baptism. Its Purpose, Practice and Power*, Green is, if anything, less inclined to be positive towards believer's baptism, as he wishes to argue that baptism within the Church of England, whether of infants or believers is the same sacrament. While the main support for his interpretation comes from the argument from circumcision, the argument from grace also surfaces:

Infant baptism...is the standing demonstration that our salvation does not depend on our very fallible faith; it depends on what God has done for us. Infant baptism reminds us that we are not saved because of our faith but through the gracious action of God on our behalf which stands, come wind come weather.³

Both Green and Morris point to Martin Luther for support – after all, when in depression and doubt, he did not turn to his experience of faith and commitment (despite the enormous place faith and justification play in his theology). Instead, he turned to his baptism as an infant in the Church of Rome. This was where he gained strength: *baptizatus sum* (I was baptised). This event, long before the Reformation, was for Luther the mark of God's grace in his life, and as such, could not be taken away by the devil.⁴

2. Baptising the Unbeliever

So here we have the first Protestant case for infant baptism. On the face of it, it seems theologically sound, and it does not seem threatened if we try to

¹ Colin Morris, *The Word and the Words* (London: Epworth, 1975), p.98.

² Michael Green, *New Life, New Lifestyle* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1973), p.32. Hereafter cited as *Lifestyle*.

³ Michael Green, *Baptism. Its Purpose, Practice and Power* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1987), p.76. Hereafter cited as *Baptism*.

⁴ *Lifestyle*, p.33; *Baptism*, p.124; Morris: *op. cit.*, p.100.

attack it or weaken it in favour of a believer's Baptist approach. The real problems start instead if we try to take it seriously and make it work assuming the theological case is actually valid. For it is when we take it seriously that its internal logic breaks down, and it ends up destroying itself.

Now according to this stance, God's grace precedes a person's faith. It precedes it chronologically, and in fundamental importance, as well as logically. Infant baptism witnesses better to God's grace, and therefore is to be preferred to believer's baptism. Listen to the strange conclusion emanating from this approach: the baptism of someone (traditionally a child) who does not yet believe is *preferable* to the baptism of someone who explicitly and publicly confesses belief in Jesus Christ as Lord, because the first expresses dependence on God's grace and witnesses to it, whereas the second is based on the much weaker and derivative component of human faith.

Now what Green and Morris need is a much weaker conclusion: that infant baptism witnesses to God's grace, which has priority over faith, *so it is permissible*. But this conclusion does not follow from their premises. The inner logic of their case is a simple syllogism as follows: grace is better than faith; but infant baptism witnesses to grace whereas believer's baptism witnesses to faith; therefore infant baptism is better than believer's baptism. To reach the weak conclusion this logic must be overlooked. The conclusion Green and Morris want is, "therefore, although to many people infant baptism looks inferior to believer's baptism, it's good enough to be allowed, too".

For the problem is with this argument of Morris and Green that if it works, it is too strong for its protagonists. For if the priority of grace supports infant baptism (as the infant receives God's blessing through the superior means of grace, whereas the believer receives his or hers only through human faith), then the conclusion is far stronger than the intended one of permitting infant baptism as a valid option, along with believer's baptism, which would also remain permissible in the absence of 're-baptism'. If the argument works, the strong conclusion is unavoidable that baptism should *never* be of believers if it is possible to baptise a person before they believe. This would certainly provide a logic for indiscriminate baptism of children of both believing and unbelieving parents. It would also give a case for baptising anyone at all who will agree to the rite of whatever age, of whatever religion, or of no religion, so long as they do not yet accept Jesus Christ as Lord. It would provide a new logic to the ministry of

someone who came into the orbit of the church: if at all possible, make sure they get baptised before they come to believe any of the gospel; that way, the service can witness to God's grace (superior) and not to any faith (inferior). Furthermore, the first task of missionaries would be to baptise people. Don't preach the gospel to people of other cultures, then they can all be baptised as a sign of God's grace at work before they believe, and none receive the inferior baptism that would follow a personal confession of faith.

Of course such a conclusion is absurd, and of course is very far from what Morris, Green and their supporters want to say. It goes against Green's explicit rejection of indiscriminate baptism (*Baptism*, pp.88f.). Furthermore, it runs directly counter to the central and consistent thrust of New Testament discussions of baptism, where adult candidates (the only ones explicitly mentioned) are always baptised after their confession of faith. Morris and Green know this, of course. But they want to have infant baptism recognised as an allowable exception to that explicit pattern, valid for societies which (unlike those of New Testament times) are – or have been – nth generation Christian. Further, they want the exception to become the norm (except in missions working in new areas), and they find their argument helps them. However, if it works, it proves the 'exception' better than the original 'norm', and so should replace the norm. But that doesn't fit with their Scripture Principle framework.

3. What is Grace?

How is it that such a strange conclusion is reached? It is, I believe, because of an inadequate and faulty understanding of how the grace and blessing of God in Christ operate. If we picture grace or blessing as a dollop of goodness poured over an individual, whenever a rite is performed by a believing minister (or even, in more ultra-Catholic contexts, whenever the rite followed according to the correct liturgical wording and practice of the Church, whether the minister believes or not), and if we add to that, that baptism is a specific measure of that dollop, which may only be administered once, and if we also see that grace is better than faith, as it is primary, and begets faith, then the conclusion that unbeliever's baptism should replace believer's baptism follows. Once it is seen that God's grace and blessing are linked powerfully to faith, then this argument is fatally undermined.

How did Green and Morris reach such a conclusion? I believe they have engaged in the doctrinal theologian's equivalent of *eisegesis*. A long-

established, deeply entrenched and indeed, much loved practice is seen as in serious need of theological support, especially from a Protestant angle. Direct biblical support is non-existent, in that even the *argumentum a silentio* based on the baptism of 'households' (*Baptism*, pp.69f.) is undermined by the explicit description in Acts 16: 32, 34, that such a 'household' heard the gospel preached (in the small hours!), came to believe, and were filled with the joy of faith. So the next best thing is attempted: support for the argument on the basis of a Protestant axiom of faith and theology: grace before faith. Superficially successful, in practice it transforms baptism into meaningless magic.

So far, it may be argued that we have engaged in slapstick, trying to laugh the argument of Green and Morris away. But although the argument from grace may not work properly in the way they want, does it not anyway undermine the believer's Baptist interpretation? Whatever the problems, isn't it true that we must see grace as prior to faith, and therefore be left with the unwelcome conclusion that the baptism of unbelievers is somehow preferable to believer's baptism? By no means!

The serious reply to Morris and Green is that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is prior to our faith, is that of his life, death and resurrection. In terms of the subjective realisation of that grace in my own personal experience, it is certainly also true that grace will precede faith, chronologically and not just theologically. For, long before I come to personal faith, I will receive blessing, as other people pray for me, share their faith, give me a Bible, live out their faith before me selfconsciously or unselfconsciously, and, it may be, that I will have experienced something of God's blessing through a service called 'infant dedication' or indeed through a service called 'infant baptism'. Such experience will not of itself make me a member of the body of Christ, or a Christian, but it may well be a vehicle of something of the grace of God. Prevenient grace is at work in Jesus Christ, and in all the Spirit's work prior to personal faith as much as following it. Infant baptism neither facilitates this nor witnesses to it any more effectively than infant dedication.

4. What about the Children?

I believe it is arguable that the account in Mark 10: 3-16 (*et par.*) of children brought to Jesus for blessing does have something in common with New Testament baptism, namely that in both occasions, this blessing of infants, and the baptism of believers, children and adults can receive blessing through Christ. But the differences ensure that the nature of this

blessing is fundamentally different. First, Jesus does not baptise these children (or have his disciples baptise them), rather he “put his hands on them and blessed them”. Secondly, he accepts the response of the mothers (though he does also point to the response-level of the children), whereas baptismal candidates made their own response (e.g., Acts 2: 41). And thirdly and critically, this episode is not linked with the children or their parents in any way becoming part of the band of disciples (i.e., that larger band, beyond the twelve), but is seen as a request for a blessing as a ‘one-off’, rather on a level with the many who came for healing, whereas baptism is always linked with being joined to the fellowship of believers, the commitment of discipleship. Thus if our theology of grace and blessing for infants is tied up with this passage, the conclusion we should reach is not that of infant baptism, as a crypto-membership of the Church, with which this episode has nothing in common, but simply that Christ wishes to bless the children with no strings attached, and no implications about becoming members of the Church, and so we too should pray with all dependence on God’s grace, that he, too, may bless the children brought to us. I have argued elsewhere that we should take more seriously the idea that God actually blesses the children brought to him for infant dedication – and that those brought in services of ‘infant baptism’ may similarly be blessed. This enables us to be a bit more positive towards those who value their own childhood experience of infant baptism, or that of their children. Further, it means that we do not need to draw the conclusion that Michael Green does that blessings received through an infant baptism ‘prove’ that infant baptism must be preferable to infant dedication. We conclude that God may bless children brought to him whether dedicated or ‘baptised’ – and that in either service we simply invite God to bless the child.⁵

What does make me a member of the body of Christ, and a Christian, then, is not infantile, unrequested rites or blessings, but the act of God in Christ, in his incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection (and behind them in election), and the act of God in the Holy Spirit in his stirring up of faith in me, so I respond to Christ, accepting him as Saviour and Lord, and respond in the public affirmation of faith, through baptism (or indeed, where a person is converted in churches of non-baptistic types, through confirmation, etc.). But grace, as the free gift of God, as his freely blessing me despite me not deserving it, continues as my experience long after the initial move towards faith. Grace comes *after* faith as well. Grace is not only at work in election, in the whole event of Jesus Christ, and in my

⁵ Anthony Thacker: ‘“Re-baptism” and ecumenicity’, in *Mainstream: Baptists for Life and Growth*, No.28 (April, 1988), pp.7-9.

justification, but also in my sanctification and ultimate redemption. In every event in which I become something more of the kind of person Christ wants me to be, we have the grace of God at work. So let us leave aside the theology of grace (in infant baptism) followed by faith (in confirmation or believer's baptism) as a gross simplification of this rich doctrine. And when Green suggests that the proof of our relationship with Christ lies in our baptism in much the same way as the proof of the bride's relationship with her husband lies in her ring (*Lifestyle*, p.32), let us recognise that in the Christian's relationship with Christ, we are not dealing with an arranged marriage that goes ahead with or without the consent of the parties!

5. Baptism and Circumcision

Much of the argument for infant baptism rests on a series of arguments from silence: although no children are mentioned as baptised in the 'households' we 'must' assume there were children there; although Jesus' blessing of children doesn't mention baptism, it 'must' mean infant baptism is acknowledged by our Lord; proselyte baptism involved baptising babies, therefore Christian baptism 'must' have followed the same practice from the start; Jesus would have been aware of proselyte baptism of children, and as he is not recorded as banning this practice, he 'must' have permitted it. Similarly regarding sprinkling/affusion, 3,000 couldn't have been baptised by immersion in Jerusalem because of the lack of sufficient water, so they 'must' have been baptised by affusion. But the most serious argument from silence that Green makes is that from circumcision. According to him, while there is a move from the Old Testament to the New, and thus a change in the actual rite used, we 'must' interpret the significance of baptism according to the biblical (Old Testament) understanding of circumcision.

For Green, just as circumcision is the sign of membership of the old covenant, so baptism is the sign of membership of the new. Green rightly points out that from the Baptist point of view, his over-reliance on this argument from circumcision (*Baptism*, p.85), and in its dependence on the Old Testament generally (*Baptism*, pp.81f.) provide serious weaknesses. Indeed, the more important of the two is this use of the Old Testament. For Green has missed the New Testament understanding of the difference between old and new covenant. He recognises that there is a move in terms of catchment area and in the nature of the rite (the first, widening the membership of the covenant to include Gentiles as well as Jews, the second, using a rite that is appropriate for women as well as men). But

Green fails to spot the change in the dynamics of the rite, the change in its function and rôle. For circumcision makes an external mark, and distinguishes a race as covenanted to God, called to serve God through God-given laws as their response to his grace in their liberation from Egypt. However, baptism relates to the people of the new covenant, a covenant in which law is internal, and in which they are members of this covenant by virtue of the fact that they all know God from the least of them to the greatest (Jeremiah 31: 31-34; Hebrews 8: 8-12, 10: 16f).

The effect of Green failing to modify his approach to the new covenant in this way is that he veers towards the Christendom model of the Church. In the Christendom model, everyone is considered through the parish system to be part of the Church (with the exception of those who have separated themselves from it), just as everyone was part of the old covenant by being in Israel (excepting those separated from it or rejected by it). Everyone is thought to be a Christian, however nominal, and is simply encouraged to be more faithful in their religious observance. This model tends towards universal baptism, normally of infants, as the way of expressing the universal membership of the Church that the Christendom model implies.

But if the Church is the community of those who believe in Jesus, have accepted him as Lord, know God (through Jesus) in a personal way, and seek, in response to divine grace, to follow him amongst a community of people who are similarly committed to him, then it follows that the rite of initiation will not be one for those who have not (yet) responded to grace, but one of such response. Nor is this, as Green suggests, a quirk of modern individualism. To be sure, modern individualism undermines the Christendom model. But baptism itself is a more individualistic rite than circumcision. For the Jew is circumcised, but the Jewess is not – she is included in the old covenant by virtue of her father's circumcision. But Christian women make their own response, not via fathers or husbands. And we should all make our own response – not as babies via fathers and mothers.

6. Adult Circumcision

Circumcision was a response of adults especially only at the beginning, with Abraham, and continued only for male converts to Judaism. Normally, children would be circumcised on their eighth day, as their parents, in obedience to the law, brought them to a priest for this purpose.

Now, according to Green, if baptism is for the Christian what circumcision is for the Jew, then infant baptism must be the normal practice, with the baptism of adult believers restricted to the inception of Christianity, and to cases where unbaptised adults are converted to Christianity. With this pattern, baptism would be related to faith by means of the faith of the community, just as with circumcision in Israel; and the believers Baptists' arguments would sound like a Jew arguing for circumcision to be restricted to adults, as Abraham at his circumcision was more sincere than Isaac, Ishmael, Jacob or Esau at theirs.

Green's line of argumentation here is no more sustainable, however, for it depends on our seeing circumcision as providing the *normative basis* for the interpretation of baptism. Despite Colossians 2: 11f, this cannot be sustained. First, if baptism has the same function as circumcision, then baptism would appear to be redundant for Jews – but it arose in a Jewish context. Actually, John's baptism provides a far truer initial basis than circumcision or even proselyte baptism to interpret what baptism means. And second, circumcision itself suffers a tremendous challenge from Paul, precisely on the basis of a theology of grace and faith. It would be extraordinary to say that this challenge of Paul to circumcision and the law would be resolved by letting baptism become the new law: exactly the same function, just a different rite. I am reminded of the misunderstanding of Jesus' radical attack on public showing off of fasting in the *Didache*, which reduces this challenge to switch to different days to the Pharisees!

7. Infant Circumcision and Grace

If we go back to the period of the New Testament, where infant baptism was not yet practised, and thus to a time when baptism in the first generation was of believers, the contrast would not have been with infant baptism but with circumcision. Now, circumcision generally happens to the child not with its consent, but with that of its parents – it is therefore free, unmerited incorporation into God's chosen people, and in that way, grace. Does the New Testament view circumcision as a rite of grace, but baptism as merely one of faith, perhaps even as a rite of merely human works? Far from it!

The most obvious texts (e.g., in Galatians) are somewhat problematic. They argue clearly indeed that observing the rite of circumcision makes law rather than faith the basis of Christian life-style. However, as the argument is in the context of the circumcision of *adult* Gentiles who have already accepted Christ as Saviour and Lord (and have

therefore been baptised into Christ), we must consider instead those verses which relate to the circumcision of a Jew in *infancy*, and the evaluation of that. Fortunately, these also exist.

The key passage is Philippians 3. In verse 5, Paul mentions his own infant circumcision, along with a number of other hallmarks of his Jewish relationship with God. However, he decries all these as putting “confidence in the flesh” (v.4). Further, he adds in vv.7f. that he considers all this as “loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord... I consider them rubbish”. Yes, this circumcision and pre-Christian experience is a “righteousness of my own that comes from the law”, and he totally prefers “that which is through faith in Christ – the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith” (v.9).

What follows from this is that even when considering his own infant circumcision, he thinks of this not as grace, but as law. Where grace comes, is in God’s righteousness, which is not so much in infant circumcision (or indeed infant baptism), but in Christ himself. Faith (expressed externally in baptism) is then not opposed to grace, but is the natural response to and receiving of God’s grace in Christ.

This, incidentally, helps us to put in perspective the traditional line of Calvin (“baptism is today for Christians what circumcision was for the ancients”⁶) and revived by Green, that sees baptism as a Christian initiation parallel with circumcision, which would then be possible for adults, as first generation believers, but normal and natural for children in the second and subsequent generations of belief. Colossians 2: 11-13, indeed, relates circumcision and baptism – but the circumcision practised there is not that of infant Jews, or even adult Gentiles, but what the prophets called the circumcision of the heart – “not with a circumcision done by the hands of men”. So Paul continues, what is needed instead is being “circumcised... with the circumcision done by Christ... in baptism... through your faith in the power of God who raised him from the dead” (v.12). Once again, we see the dynamics: not by law (literal circumcision) but by *faith*, expressed externally in *baptism*, which is a response to and receiving of the *power of God*.

Green’s problems are not solved by returning to the magisterial might of Calvin himself. For, despite the intellectual rigour we would expect, and some convincing elements, Calvin gets himself into all kinds of difficulties on this issue. Calvin wanted to reject the arguments of the

⁶ Jean Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, IV, ch. xiv, 24, see also ch. xvi, 3ff. Quoted hereafter as *Institutes*.

Scholastics, like Lombard and Aquinas and return to the brilliant simplicity (as he saw it) of Augustine, “the best and most reliable witness of all antiquity” (*Institutes*, ch. xiv, 26). Specifically, he rejected their differentiation between “Old Testament sacraments” (like circumcision) with New Testament ones (like baptism), with the OT ones only foreshadowing God’s grace, but the NT ones giving it as a present reality. Instead, he saw them on a much more equal footing (*Institutes*, ch. xiv, 23). Really, the only difference was in the outward form (*Institutes*, ch. xvi, 4). So, outward reception of communion with inward rebellion is just as bad for Corinthian Christians as for wilderness Israelites. (*Institutes*, ch. xiv, 23). Similarly, outward washing without faith is spurned as much as outward circumcision without faith. This already tilts the argument more towards believer’s baptism than Calvin would want, where alone outward baptism (washing) and inward baptism (“inwardly clean”) are one (*Institutes*, ch. xiv, 24). Calvin would rescue his argument by reminding us that infant circumcision and infant baptism alike happen before such heart-religion.

Calvin of course resisted believer’s baptism, as he wanted to avoid what he perceived as re-baptism. As he makes OT circumcision so parallel to NT baptism, it is unsurprising that he also makes John the Baptist’s baptism equivalent to Christian baptism. Indeed his arguments require that. But Acts 19 provides a problem: Paul’s baptism of the Ephesian 12, who had already been baptised by John. He declines to solve it by suggesting it is a pre-Christian, and thus inadequate baptism. Instead, he flatly disputes the plain meaning of the text. He avers that “they were baptised in the name of Jesus” means that they were *not* baptised – by water. Instead Paul only laid hands on them, so they received “the baptism of the Holy Spirit”. He sees the mention of this ministry of the Spirit in verse 6 as proving his point (*Institutes*, ch. xv, 18). This is a simple dereliction of the text, plain *eisegesis*, in order to avoid an ‘Anabaptist’ conclusion.

Nor is this the end of Calvin’s problems. Calvin rejected permission to women to baptise – even in emergency situations. Because he sees circumcision so closely in parallel to baptism, he is vulnerable to the charge that Zipporah’s emergency circumcision of her son (Exodus 4: 25) sets a precedent for women to baptise in emergencies (*Institutes*, ch. xv, 22). Calvin’s difficulties with this text are understandable. As Brevard Childs notes, “Few texts contain more problems for the interpreter than these few verses”.⁷ But Calvin’s conclusions are nonetheless riddled with problems,

⁷ Brevard Childs, *Exodus* (London: SCM, 1974), p.95.

and seem to turn the meaning of the passage on its head. Having concluded that Zipporah, far from offering a service to God and saving her husband (or son), had impetuously “clamoured against God and her husband”, solves his problem by concluding anyway that there is one difference between circumcision and baptism: circumcising is not restricted to priests, whereas for Calvin, baptising *is* restricted to ordained ministers. He interprets Matthew 28:19 as commanding baptism, and the other provisions of the Great Commission on ordained *men* alone.

Quite apart from these struggles to interpret the text in line with his conclusions, the theological problems mentioned earlier remain for Calvin as much as for his followers. Namely, that the difference between circumcision and baptism is not restricted to the outward mechanism, but the whole significance of the rites. Circumcision represents initiation into Israel, a covenant nation, an ethnic community; baptism represents initiation into the Church, a covenant community of believers, a people not of any nation but of faith. Calvin’s approach overlooks this vital development.

8. Conclusions

Our conclusions are clear. First, the New Testament sees *grace* as expressed neither in infant circumcision, not in any prospective infant baptism, but above all in God’s action in Jesus Christ, in that he dies for our sins, was buried, and was raised by God’s power, and in the work of the Holy Spirit, guiding us towards faith and in it. It is *this* grace that is prior to baptism.

Therefore, we should not resort to the spurious argument that infant baptism more naturally witnesses to grace for two reasons: 1) if we do so, we are obliged to see baptism without faith as better than baptism with faith, leading to the absurdities of unbelievers’ baptism, trying to baptise people because they are not Christian, so as to signal prevenient grace; and 2) because in the New Testament, it is believer’s baptism that witnesses to grace, in that it is *the faith-response to God’s grace* in Jesus Christ. Those who share my own perspective, as a Baptist, need to recognise that believer’s baptism represents a celebration of God’s grace in Christ, which has now, by the power of the Holy Spirit, found its echo in the believing Christian.

And secondly, the argument from *circumcision* should also be resisted, as that leads to a Christendom model of the Church – the old

covenant for Gentiles as well – instead of the Church as the community of those called by God in Christ, and who respond, through the work of the Holy Spirit, and accept incorporation into Christ, by baptism into his people – their response of faith to his act of grace. The “scandal of indiscriminate baptism” (*Baptism*, p.97) and indeed “gross nominalism” of churches practising infant baptism is not due to deficiencies and laxity in the discipline of infant baptism (*pace* Green: *Baptism*, pp.98f.), but due to the very theology that underlies it. Such nominalism can only be avoided by Christ’s people seeking, by divine grace, to function as the people of the new covenant.

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The Baptist World Alliance: Message from the Centenary Congress, Birmingham, United Kingdom, July 2005

The Baptist World Alliance (BWA) celebrated its Centenary in July 2005 with over 13,000 people participating in the special congress in Birmingham, England. Two years previously it was agreed there should be a 'Congress Message' declaring to the world and the Baptist constituency the generally accepted identity of the BWA at this Centenary point.

At the first Congress in London in 1905, the British Baptist preacher, Dr Alexander McLaren, had those present recite together the Apostle's Creed to demonstrate to the general Christian world that Baptists were not a sect, but part of mainstream Christianity.¹ At the 1923 Congress in Stockholm, Sweden, a message was prepared making clear the main features and programme aims of the BWA.²

In 2004 the BWA Congress Resolutions Committee was enhanced with additional members from all the regions of the Alliance and began work on producing a message to be released at the Centenary Congress.³

Ultimately, two documents were produced: a Centenary Message, which was unanimously accepted by the BWA General Council as an official message to be handed to every Congress participant and distributed to the world Baptist family; accompanied by a second, longer, document which seeks to unpack some of the ideas and issues in the message. The longer document is intended for reflection and discussion within the member bodies of the BWA, as a tool for seminars, for educational purposes in seminaries and so forth, and was unanimously agreed by the Congress Resolutions Committee and received by the BWA General Council to be made available to member bodies and seminaries.

As chair of the BWA Congress Resolutions Committee it was my privilege to work on both texts through long discussions and, finally, to present the two versions to the BWA General Council, and the Centenary

¹ The history of the Alliance is told in *Baptists Together in Christ 1905-2005. A Hundred-Year History of the Baptist World Alliance*. Richard V Pierard (General Editor) (BWA Falls Church, Virginia, 2005).

² The text of this message is found in *Baptist World Alliance Congress, Stockholm, 1923*. The official proceedings of the Congress (BWA, London, 1924).

³ With corresponding members and additional consultant theologians, a total of twenty-six people representing all parts of the BWA world family participated in the drafting exercise. The document was also sent on two occasions to member bodies for comments and suggestions. The final editing group consisted of the incoming President of the BWA, the General Secretary and four members of the Congress Resolutions Committee.

Message to the BWA Congress. As an aid to dissemination, we print the Congress message below. In a future edition of this Journal we shall offer the background discussion document as an aid to those seeking to reflect upon Baptist identity in our own time.

Keith G Jones

To Baptist believers throughout the world with love and joy from those assembled together in Birmingham, UK, at the Centenary Congress of the BWA:-

Together those assembled –

The Hope of a New Heaven and a New Earth

1. Renew our commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ, our God and Saviour, our guide and friend, in the power of the Holy Spirit and we affirm our life together as a community of faith looking forward in hope to Christ's return and God's New Heaven and a New Earth;

Our Triune God

2. Believe in the one eternal God who revealed Himself to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit;
3. Rejoice that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, revealed in the Scriptures as fully God and fully human, and whose life shows us the way of true discipleship, was crucified for us and was raised from the dead on the third day to save us from our sins;

Scripture

4. Declare that the divinely inspired Old and New Testament Scriptures have supreme authority as the written Word of God and are fully trustworthy for faith and conduct;

The Church and the Kingdom

5. Believe the Christian faith is best understood and experienced within the community of God's people called to be priests to one another, as these Scriptures are read and studied together. We thank God for all those who study God's word and seek to put its teachings into practice individually and collectively through congregational polity;

6. Understand that our worship, mission, baptism and celebrating of the Lord's Supper, joyously witnesses to God's great purposes in creation and redemption;
7. Believe our gathering churches, with other true Christian churches, are called to be witnesses to the Kingdom of God. To that end we pray, work and hope for God's Kingdom as we proclaim its present and coming reality;
8. Declare that through the Holy Spirit we experience interdependence with those who share this dynamic discipleship of the church as the people of God. As such, we affirm Christian marriage and family life;
9. Repent for not having prayed and worked hard enough to fulfil the prayer of Christ for the church's unity. We commit ourselves to pray and work to further the unity of Christian believers;
10. Affirm that Believers' Baptism by immersion is the biblical way to publicly declare discipleship for those who have repented of sin and come to personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour;

The Work of Christ: Atonement and Redemption

11. Affirm the dignity of all people, male and female, because they are created in God's image and called to be holy. We acknowledge we are corrupted by sin, which incurs divine wrath and judgement;
12. Confess the atoning sacrifice of Christ on the cross, dying in our place, paying the price of sin and defeating evil, who by this love reconciles believers with our loving God;

Stewardship of God's Creation

13. Proclaim our love of God's created world and affirm our commitment to the stewardship of God's creation;

Our Mission

14. Declare that God gives spiritual gifts to believers who are called to live a life of worship, service and mission. These gifts are discerned and confirmed by the believing community together;
15. Know that in the Great Commission, every believer, empowered by God, is called to be a missionary, learning and sharing more of Christ that the world might believe;

Religious Freedom and Justice

16. Confess that faith in Christ entails a passionate commitment to religious liberty, freedom, peace and justice;
17. Affirm that in Jesus Christ all people are equal. We oppose all forms of slavery, racism, apartheid and ethnic cleansing and so will do all in our power to address and confront these sins;

Now, at this centenary gathering these things we declare, affirm and covenant to the Lord Jesus Christ and to each other, believing the truth found in Him and revealed in the Scriptures. We, recognising that this is a partial and incomplete confession of faith, boldly declare that we believe the truth is found in Jesus Christ as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. Because we have faith and trust in Him so we resolve to proclaim and demonstrate that faith to all the world.

Amen and Amen. Maranatha, come, Lord Jesus, come.

Keith G Jones is Rector of the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Prague. He has served on the BWA Resolutions Committee from 1991 until 2005. He was Secretary of the Committee 1995-2000 and Chair of the Committee 2000-2005.

From ECEN to every church and congregation in Europe



european christian environmental network

Members of the European Christian Environmental Network met in Basel in May 2005. The 120 delegates and guests represented Christians from 30 countries in Europe and overseas. As members of Anglican, Orthodox, Protestant, Old Catholic and Roman Catholic churches, we brought a rich diversity of theological traditions, environmental issues, and church experiences. But together we shared one urgent concern: how, as the people of Jesus Christ, we are called to manifest his love for the whole of God's creation in the midst of the environmental crisis.

Empowered and encouraged by our Assembly, the members of the network now return to our different churches and countries to work together with you to find a new and sustainable way of living. We call on churches, congregations and individual Christians throughout Europe to:

- Celebrate Creation time during September and October each year.
- Rediscover the Eucharist as the place where God is already healing creation.
- Promote education for sustainable living in your churches, in your communities, and in the national curriculum.
- Play your part in tackling climate change by reducing your energy consumption and using green electricity.
- Form relationships of eco-justice with communities in the South who are affected by our profligate lifestyle.
- Change the way you travel, dramatically reducing car use and air travel, and promoting alternatives.
- Manage your church life sustainably, by implementing policies on energy efficiency, purchasing, waste, land and finance.
- Value water, by using it carefully and advocating its availability for the benefit of all creation.
- Learn about, protect and enjoy the diversity of nature around you.

There are many programmes and resources around Europe to support you in this work: you can find out about these on our website, www.ecen.org, along with materials which ECEN has developed. Small actions are already adding up to big results and many churches are taking action. When ECEN next meets we look forward to praising God for all that Christians have done to care for creation throughout Europe. And when we again share our stories and experiences, your story will be among them.

European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN) aims to ensure the protection and care for God's creation. It is a network linked with the Conference of European Churches. ECEN was established in 1998 following the recommendation of the second European Ecumenical Assembly.

Book Reviews

Rollin G. Grams

Rival Versions of Theological Enquiry

In Mapping Baptist Identity, an IBTS Research Publication.

IBTS, Prague, Czech Republic, 2005, 132 pp, 200 Czech Crowns

Dr Grams' monograph is the inaugural volume of IBTS' Research Publications, *Mapping Baptist Identity*. It is the first of two works engaged in an ongoing conversation of the proponents and critics of narrative or tradition-laden theological enquiry. Grams is probing into the relationship between the essence of Christian moral life (encoded in the biblical narrative), the shape of communal moral life (deciphered in faith community's narrative) and the expression of the virtues of corporate and personal Christian character (in the explicit and implicit sets of communal practices and norms), compared and contrasted with the rival moral claims of the competing forms of social life.

Grams' work is a sequel to a series of publications tracing the development of biblical hermeneutics and its bearing on Christian daily living as moral and missional community. While sympathetic to the recent turn of ethicists' attention to virtue and character formation in community, and his earlier publications on academic deliberation on ethical issues, Grams is critical of the lack of concreteness in applied ethics. He rightfully argues for communal and contextual grounds of Christian social ethics. It has been widely agreed that the symbolic world of the New Testament narrative converges on the notion of the Kingdom of God, which Grams affirms. He discerns the Kingdom in the Christian corporate identification with the vision of the Kingdom and with the community's attempts to live out the virtues of the Kingdom, while staying in constant moral dialogue with surrounding culture. To use McClendon's hermeneutical formulae, it is 'that' eschatological moral vision which defines 'this' moral life of a community (or of a person). And it is the 'then' of the fulfilment of the vision that verifies the 'now' of everyday living. To put Grams' argument of the present work in a proper perspective one ought to consider Grams' project, which I reviewed elsewhere (*JEBS* 4:1), in its entirety.

Gram's series is a compendium of resources for anyone interested in the history and the present state of the debate on the applicability and meaning of biblical moral norms. It may be of substantial help for the research student's academic work. It raises a critically important question of how the canonical records of the biblical narrative can successfully

guide decision-making of a contemporary Christian believer or believing community. In the sequel, Grams will step further in responding to this formidable and notoriously difficult task from the position of a faith-community within a tradition seeking understanding of its formative convictions.

The present work is a creative attempt to bring Alasdair McIntyre's philosophical insights to bear on Richard Hays' four-fold biblical hermeneutics. In doing so Grams assumes that Hays' four tasks of moral interpretation – descriptive, synthetic, hermeneutical (or dogmatic, in Grams' terminology) and applicatory – “relate to all forms of Christian theological interpretation”. (p. 12) They are compatible with any other mode of enquiry in philosophy and theology. It is possible, therefore, to demonstrate how McIntyre's three versions of moral inquiry – modernist (rationalist), sceptical (deconstructive) and tradition-based (narrative) – have been pursued in each of the interpretative tasks in their interrelatedness. This is precisely the purpose of Grams' undertaking.

Grams begins his analysis with an extended descriptive introduction of major categories relevant to his research such as the four hermeneutical tasks of Christian theology and the three versions of philosophical enquiry. For the main part of the work he chooses to follow the line of the modernist mode of enquiry as it has been developed for the four tasks of theological interpretation, taken in the order outlined above, and to review the challenges posed by deconstructive and tradition-based enquiries. Such approach secures coherence of his analysis and of the critique.

The breadth of Grams', at times, scrupulous analysis and the scope of his critical review of relevant sources is impressive. A helpful set of summary tables brings into focus his principle points, while thorough footnoting gives further details about useful secondary and supporting themes. Building on years of experience as a research lecturer at IBTS and the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, Grams' work is purposefully addressed to postgraduate students, orienting them in their research work. It is a graceful and thoughtful service to the academic community in line with his longstanding interest in mapping the contemporary normative values of the New Testament collection of documents concerning the early churches' social life.

The Revd Dr Parush R Parushev

Series general editor of *Mapping Baptist Identity*

An IBTS Research Publication

Nigel G Wright

Free Church/Free State – The Positive Baptist Vision

Carlisle: Paternoster, 2005, 292 pages, £9.99

This is the ‘must have’ book for anyone concerned about renewal and recovery of the baptistic vision and identity within our gathering church family. Nigel Wright has us greatly in his debt with the regular flow of important books on a range of theological topics. However, this is surely the most important to date to come from his pen.

We live in a world and belong to churches which have been corrupted in their ecclesiology and lifestyle by myriad influences since Smythe and Helwys first tried to work out a form of ecclesial community to which the name ‘Baptist’ was applied. Various aspects of other Christian traditions and, more recently, insights from the world of management and corporate business have been taken on board in many so-called baptist communities. Now, Nigel Wright, working from first principles and a deep theological foundation, constructs again a persuasive argument for the shape of communities who use the name ‘Baptist’ and who work with an ecclesiology informed by the Gospel narratives and radical reformation insights.

Here is a book of quality for our generation which articulates Baptist ecclesiology and identity alongside and in response and reaction to other models. It does so in a spirit of openness. Here is no narrow polemic arguing a case against others, but a sane and thoughtful articulation of the ecclesiology that many of us seek to shape our lives by. Wright works with a vision that is so firmly rooted in the Trinity, and sees the ecclesial community as a living, dynamic activity engaged with the story of Jesus as encountered in Scripture. This is where he starts – biblical and theological foundations for the church. Then, following a concise review of our radical reformation heritage, he develops recent theological reflection on the gathering church as a community formed from discipleship baptism and developing around the celebration of the Eucharist which shapes the practices of the community.

Wright reflects again on the place of the catechumenate, ministries – both local and translocal, and, of course, the interdependency of the churches. Here, topics vital to authentic baptist life are explored with a thoughtfulness and persuasiveness which will make the book a classic on Baptist identity. In our generation true theological and ecclesiological insights of Baptists have been undermined by what might be seen as ‘false doctrines’. These doctrines may hold sway in some other parts of the world,

but Baptists in Europe will rejoice that a leading theologian amongst us has provided a contemporary articulation of our true heritage to inspire and re-connect us with our own identity, history and narrative.

Having set out our ecclesiology, Wright then turns to exploring the implications for what such communities will believe about the wider civil and political life. This is an important part of the book, not least for Europe as we emerge from the communist era and face the development of the European Union, articulating afresh historic concerns about religious liberty and a viable form of separation of church and state.

In conclusion he provides some route markers for the way ahead which will promote healthy debate amongst us. Readers might have gathered that I think this book rather good. I invite you to read it for yourself as an excellent articulation, in a very readable style, of authentic baptist identity today. Nigel Wright has done an important job for us.

The Revd Keith G Jones
Rector, IBTS

Jim [James Gladstone MacDonald] Purves

The Triune God and the Charismatic Movement: A Critical Appraisal of Trinitarian Theology and Charismatic Experience from a Scottish Perspective
Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004, 260 pages (from the Foreword by the reviewer).

The title of the book is rather deceiving. Whereas its clear focus upon the Scottish Charismatic Movement implies a location in particular time and space, it is more than a contextual inquiry, in that it narrates a more complex story of the Church's struggle to come to terms with the role of the Spirit in the mystery of the Trinity. In an almost encyclopaedic breadth, it spans time and denominational boundaries by reaching to the beginnings of the Christian movement, touching on the origins of the Reformed tradition and reflecting on twentieth-century Pentecostalism and Charismatic Renewal in the historic churches.

Purves builds upon not only his faith pilgrimage and charismatic experience, as valuable as these are, but also on years of pastoral experience and theological study and reflection within three major forms of ecclesial life in Scotland. Further, he focuses his research within the dominant Scottish Reformed theological tradition, thereby creating a medium and vocabulary that enable him to relate the Charismatic emphasis on suprarational experience to more conventional theological language.

The accompanying glossary of theological and specialist terms is quite appropriate for this work.

The first part is a succinct account of a largely western Christian, and particularly Augustinian, line of theological thinking about the nature and ministry of the Holy Spirit in the complexity of the relationship to the Son; and their relationship within the Father in the Trinitarian understanding of God. From chapter three on, the author surveys theological developments in the Calvinist heritage. The inquiry unfolds by juxtaposing contrasting perspectives rather than tracing the developments chronologically; and his analysis illumines a tendency within (Scottish) Reformed theology of subordinating Pneumatology to Christology.

In the last chapter of the book, considering seriously the Charismatic Movement's emphasis upon immanent experience of God and developing further some Ante-Nicene patristic soteriological insights, Purves presents his own perspective on the working of the Holy Spirit. He moves away from both exclusively Christocentric theological models and currently fashionable emphases on the Social Trinity by redefining the relationality within the Trinity in terms of ontic actuality (the becomingness towards humanity) of the Son and of the Spirit. His revised Trinitarian model emphasises three distinctive characteristics: 1) the bifocal symmetry of the ontic actuality of the Son and the Spirit; 2) the effect of the Spirit in bringing persons to proximate towards the person of Jesus Christ; and, deductively, 3) the two-fold procession of the Spirit from the Father to the incarnate Son and from the Father to humanity, resulting in an eschatological perception of the resurrected humanity in Christ.

Advancing further the works of Colin Gunton and John Zizioulas, Purves's pneumatological approach affirms a bifocal symmetry of the Son and of the Spirit in God's salvific economy. His theological model offers a balance between the ontic actuality of the Son in the Incarnation and the immanent becomingness of God in the Spirit towards persons and communities evident in charismatic experience and, concurrently, in the activating human eschatological awareness. This is the point at which the revised Trinitarian model departs most radically from the traditional western model and comes closer to the spirit of Orthodox theologising. Purves argues, however, that the revised Trinitarian model can fit into the framework of the Scottish tradition and accommodate the experience of the Charismatic Movement in Scotland.

Initially, I was rather sceptical in the positive outcome of Purves' inquiry. Having read his study, I can definitively commend his project.

Even a biased observer has to agree that a renewed emphasis on the working of the Holy Spirit is an important fact about the current life of the churches across the denominational divide and across the globe. A sensitive openness to the Spirit's immediate presence brings re-vitalisation and emotional warmth and strengthens Christian commitment. But at the same time, it is true, at least in Eastern Europe, that spontaneously-emerging Charismatic communities with rather superficial theological thinking act more like a therapeutic emergency unit than as an organic whole. Thus, theological reflection on the marvels of the experience of the community gathering in the Spirit is badly needed.

Even if one opts for *doing* theology, as I would prefer, rather than constructing models of how to do it, a convictional model or map of the process for doing is still needed. Not surprisingly, this map of a particular doing is made intelligible in terms of the existing or dominant theological culture of the author. Mutual interpenetrating of medium and message is inevitable.

The strength of Purves's research work lies in the masterful blend of experience and contextual language of appropriation. It is a rewarding attempt to expand the Trinitarian and Pneumatological insights of the Scottish Reformed tradition to embrace the experience of the Charismatic renewal movement in Scotland in the 1960s and 70s. His penetrating analysis provides an excellent example of a much-needed link between the experiential primary theological life of the Church and the well-developed conceptual framework of secondary academic theological discourse.

Dr Purves has accomplished a formidable task in this book. He has worked carefully on relating hard theological thinking with meaningful Christian experience of both an individual and an ecclesial community. By doing that he has achieved a fine balance between rigorous, but some times detached scholastic rationality of Protestant theological inquiries, and the experiential earnestness apophatic, mystical and charismatic ecclesial cultures reluctant to engage in kataphatic theological quests. While the premises of his work are contextually dependent, he has brought forth important issues for the whole Christian Church. I found Dr Purves's theological reflections refreshing and illuminating. One may not always agree with his assessment or follow his interpretation of a particular event or theological insight, but certainly his stimulating thought will leave no one concerned with the wellbeing of the Church indifferent. It is particularly true for adherents of the Radical Reformation.

Dr Parush Parushev

Pro-Rector/Academic Dean, IBTS

International Conference on Baptist Studies IV

Wednesday, 12 – Saturday, 15 July 2006

Acadia University, Wolfville, Nova Scotia, Canada

There have been three previous International Conferences on Baptist Studies – at Regent's Park College, Oxford, in 1997, at Wake Forest University, North Carolina, in 2000 and at the International Baptist Theological Seminary, Prague, in 2003. The fourth in the series is to be held in July 2006 at Acadia University in Nova Scotia, Canada, helping to mark the centennial celebrations of the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches. All the conferences take the Baptists as their subject matter but are not restricted to Baptists as speakers or attenders. The theme this time is 'Mission', which includes home and foreign mission, evangelism and social concern. What has been the Baptist experience of mission in different lands at various times? The theme will be considered by case studies, some of which will be very specific in time and place, while others will cover long periods and more than one country.

Thirteen main speakers will address many aspects of the subject, but offers of short papers to last no more than 25 minutes in delivery are welcome. They should relate in some way to 'Baptists and Mission'. The title should be submitted to Professor D. W. Bebbington, Department of History, University of Stirling, Stirling FK9 4TB, Scotland, United Kingdom (e-mail: d.w.bebbington@stir.ac.uk). It is planned that a volume containing some of the conference papers will appear in the series of Studies in Baptist History and Thought published by Paternoster Press. Papers from the first conference have appeared in that series as *The Gospel in the World: International Baptist Studies*, edited by David Bebbington, and volumes representing the second and third conferences will also be published.

By the generosity of the Convention and the university, the charge for the whole conference will be kept at under \$US200 for full board over three days. There are reduced charges for those wishing to attend for up to 48 hours rather than the whole conference and it will be possible to remain until the morning of Sunday 16 July at no extra cost. Programmes and application forms are expected to be available soon.